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SUBJECT: REFUGEE SITUATION IN GHANA

REF: STATE 241606

1. Per reftel, Emboff met with the head of the political department at MFA. GOG officials assured him that Ghana would not object if there were to be a flood of Ivorian refugees entering Ghana. Large numbers could cause logistical problems, but the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) had the lead on this issue. In a separate conversation, an official at the MOI said that Ghana would maintain its "open door" policy toward refugees. The MOI had already identified three potential sites near the Ivorian border that could be used to house large numbers of refugees temporarily.

2. Partly to assess the situation near the border, Ref Coord visited the Krisan refugee camp, located 30 miles east of the Ivorian frontier, on November 9. At that point there had been no new admissions of Ivorian refugees. Thanks to active U.S. and Australian resettlement programs, total refugee population there had declined from a peak of 3,800 to less than 1,000, including 500 Togolese, 300 Liberians, 180 Sudanese, and a smattering of seven other nationalities, none of them numbering more than 35. There was no longer any full-time NGO presence at the camp, although a UN volunteer continued to provide medical services at the clinic.

3. UNHCR Resettlement Officer Peter Trotter told Ref Coord today that 14 busloads of third country nationals had entered Ghana from Cote d'Ivoire over the past week. Mainly Malians and Burkinabes, the passengers were all expected to proceed to their countries of origin to wait out the cessation of hostilities. Ironically, somewhere between 1,500 and 5,000 Ivorians had fled into Nimba County, Liberia, where many Liberians who had formerly taken refuge in Cote d'Ivoire now resided. Trotter confirmed that UNHCR had worked with the GOG on a contingency plan, but noted that in 2001 they had planned for up to 120,000 Ivorian refugees; the actual number of arrivals ended up being only 120.

4. Post will continue to keep addressees apprised of any significant movement of refugees.

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